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ABSTRACT

One major problem with designing a long-term evaluation strategy for administrator preparation programs is the difficulty of determining adequate measures of administrative success. The most practical approach to developing useful criteria seems to be to begin with job descriptions and analyses of actual administrative tasks. Of course, a university cannot train future administrators to handle every task that will confront them, but such an approach insures preparation for at least some of the major elements of most administrative positions. We can only build long-range evaluation into new models of administrator preparation if the models are based on careful analyses of inservice administrative behaviors with which the university is competent to deal. The content validity of the preparation is then assured and long-range evaluation simply requires updating job analyses and comparing them with current training programs. (Author/JG)

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BUILDING LONG RANGE EVALUATION INTO NEW MODELS OF ADMINISTRATOR PREPARATION

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Building Long Range Evaluation into New Models of Administrator Preparation

The phrase has a nice ring to it, largely because of two comfortable elements: "new models" -- what educator's heart doesn't beat faster in anticipation of another new model of administrator preparation? That phrase, and the plans and hopes that accompany it, have stimulated articles and conferences as well as contributed to paying overhead in departments of administration that are skilled in the arts of grantsmanship.

Even more attractive than the term "new models" is "long range evaluation". That's the kind of evaluation we can best live with -- the longer range, the better! If survival were a primary goal of an educational administration department chairmen he might turn to the criterion study model for long range evaluation of his department's program. First, goals and objectives must be established for the program. Our survival-minded chairman will, of course, rely on a committee to come up with the department's goals and objectives. The committee may, in the fullness of time, agree on a report. All those with a conceivable interest in the subject -- department, faculty, students, graduates, colleagues in other areas -- then add to the list of department goals. The next step is a review of the present program to insure that at least some of the departments' students are being given the opportunity to learn what the faculty, et al., beli they ought to know. It's a safe bet that the goals and objectives will be couched in a manner that allows for quite different training programs. Records of students who experience each training program should be placed in a time capsule and uncovered some 5-10 years hence. Do those in training program A show significantly greater success than those in program X? Do those

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who ranked highest in Program A show significantly greater success in practice than their lower scoring brethren in the same program?

The criterion validity model for long range evaluation has a rather respectable look about it at first glance, and the hiatus between treatment and design may allow the department chairman to reach retirement in relative peace. But whatever the attraction of the model just outlined, it really makes no sense at all for evaluating educational administration programs.

Long range evaluation of administrator preparation almost seems an illusion. The best criterion -- success in practice -- is subjective, mobile and highly situation-dependent. Subjective, since indicators like salary, rank, collegial esteem, etc., are not equally valued nor equally available to similarly prepared graduates. The concept of the successful administrator simply won't stand still: at least every generation of school administrators receives a new criterion of success. Authoritarian or democratic, manager of work or mediator of interpersonal relations, each presents a new definition of the successful administrator. Success -- however defined -- depends strongly on the administrative environment. The superintendent who was great in Littleburg is a disaster in Metropolis. The principal who received rave notices from parents is branded, 10 years later, as insensitive, ineffective, and urwelcome by parents of a different ethnic or racial background.

The thought of standardizing several distinct training programs to insure each student in a given program essentially the same learning experiences must engender wry amusement among department chairman -- the individualism of faculty members needs no comment. Add to the variations among instructors

the lack of discrimination in student grading procedures and there appears to be no stable base for conducting long range criterion evaluation of administrative training programs.

The potential long-range evaluator's life isn't made easier by the distinctions that exist in sources of judgement. We want to speak most often about product evaluation - the actual functions of the educational executive - as the major criterion. But the preparing institution has a set of objectives that may not always overlap or be consistent with practitioners activities. Theoretically, the three commonly used factors to evaluate faculty - teaching, research and service - should all relate to student outcomes. In fact, such relationships may be so subtle as to be unverifiable. Do they then become invalid, or must the faculty justify its existence and its functions against the standard of administrative practice?

Any model of administrator preparation must somehow come to terms with the variations among students, their reasons for entering, and commitment to the preparation programs. There are full time candidates for the doctorate, with some institutions holding different expectations for those seeking the Ph.D or Ed.D. Many administration doctoral students work in quite demanding, full-time positions, especially during the period they are writing their dissertations. The majority of administration students are part-time attendants their motives and objectives may radically differ from full-time students. It's possible too that by some success criteria, e.g., level of job or salary, the name of the university granting the degree is vastly more powerful than the nature or quality of a program, or an individual's achievement within that program. It's at least equally conceivable that recruitment and selection in educational administration programs is the really powerful determinant of future success.

Having progressed this far into what seems an evaluation wasteland, I'll now suggest that there exists over the horizon, if not a promised land, at least a few promising approaches.

Long range evaluation of administrator preparation should begin, not with the preparation for, but the practice of school administration. Does that sound like a statement of the obvious, something everyone knows and does now? Reflect on the legal problems caused for some private companies and public school districts by their hiring and promotion policies. They failed to base their measures of job preparation on systematic analyses of job requirements. An article in the Harvard Educational Review points out that Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 is potential dynamite for those engaged in preparing and credentialing people for jobs.[1] Suppose that a school district seeking an assistant superintendent requires a doctoral degree for that position. Suppose further that the doctoral requirement disqualifies a disproportionate number of women, blacks, Spanish speaking, or other identifiable populations. Suppose finally, that the board of education cannot demonstrate by defensible research studies that there exists a significant correlation between the doctoral degree and job performance -- note that the burden of proof is on the district. The conclusion that would be drawn by the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission (EEOC) and, quite probably, by the courts is that the district may no longer require the degree as a qualification for that administrative position.

We've already seen the problems of determining measures of administrative success and evaluating preparation programs against that amorphous criterion. But even the EEOC and the courts do not demand criterion validity studies to

1) Sheila Huff, "Credentialing by Tests or by Degrees: Title VII of the Civil Rights Act and Griggs v. Duke Power Co.," Harvard Educational Review, 44:2, May 1974.

legitimize training requirements. Carefully conducted content validation studies can provide a rationale that is less exact than the ideal of predictive validity correlations, but appears possible to achieve. So, one begins evaluating administrator preparation programs by undertaking job descriptions and job analyses of administrative tasks. The more role-specific these studies can be the better. Research over the next several years should scrutinize specific positions such as chairman, vice-principal, assistant superintendent for personnel; specific environments like elementary and secondary, inner-city and suburban schools, and so on. Research of this nature, incidentally, appears an ideal meeting ground for a university and a school system, since each stands to profit a great deal from the outcomes.

Methodologies for conducting job analyses and identifying major tasks are familiar enough. Not surprisingly the most reliable results came from combining and cross-validating data gathered from a variety of sources: these include existing job description, self-reports, and various kinds of observer reports. Certainly any researcher interested in undertaking such analyses would save himself a great deal of time by studying existing reports of administrative tasks, including in-basket studies [2] and techniques for identifying key administrative responsibilities like those recently described by McIntyre.[3]

2) The classic example of in-basket studies in school administration is still Administrative Performance and Personality, by Hemphill, Griffith and Frederiksen. (1962) That study received encouragement and support from the University Council on Educational Administration; UCEA later developed other series of in-basket studies.

3) See Chapter six, "Administering and Improving the Instructional Program" in Performance Objectives for School Principals by Culbertson, Henson and Morris (1974).

Note that the recommended job analyses are not simply a first step in correlational studies which compare relative success in educational administration studies with relative success on a single dimension or sum of on-the-job competencies. For reasons indicated earlier, the likelihood of such predictive validity studies yielding useful information is slim, if not none. Rather than determining a range of performance for each major administrative task, the investigator simply identifies important job elements, then determines whether the content of an administrator training program significantly overlaps some of those job requirements. Note the qualification: the university can do some things well, some badly, and some not at all. Moreover, defending a training program as the totality of experience needed to perform an amalgam of complex human activities is as simple-minded as rejecting a measure of preparation because it relates "only" to one or more significant parts rather than the whole of the job. Let's assume that it is an important task of principals to recommend teachers for retention, promotion, or dismissal, and that the principals' preparation includes training in how to arrive at valid, reliable judgements of teaching behavior on the basis of observation and analysis. At least one element in the administrators' preparation is valid for one major element of the job.

Of course, many relationships are not so obvious and -- one more time -- many administrative tasks are not taught and may not be teachable in the university.

If we've agreed that university programs can't do everything, for what part of the administrator's job can they and should they accept responsibility? One can find a bewildering variety of responses to these queries, but they tend to fall into three categories which are illustrated in a story first told, I believe, by Cyril Houle. In my probably multilated version, last

year's teacher graduates return to Swashbuckle University and during a colloqium with their recent instructors complain that they were poorly prepared to enter the classroom. "You didn't show us how to run a mimeograph machine, how to calm hysterical mothers or aggressive fathers, and especially, you didn't tell us how to keep those kids from driving us up the wall every grisly day!" Five years later the same class returns and says to its erstwhile instructors, "you didn't prepare us properly: we should have had many more courses in our major fields, and fewer of those Mickey Mouse methods courses; the training in professional education should have emphasized understanding of pupil motivation, human relations and a lot more about the sociology of various population g oups". Enter our surviving graduates some ten years later. Now the remnant of their university faculty is told, "you didn't come close to giving us what we need for teaching. What we should have had is a broad background in the origins and great ideas of our civilization, and the background and tools to develop better goals for education".

Since we're talking about long range evaluation, I suggest that the 5th and 10th year classes in the preceding story had something to say to educational administration programs as well. The general charge the university should accept is stated by March:

> The university has a distinctive area of competence. It is the domain of the intellect. (the university's advantage) is in providing the research basis for intelligence and in teaching the intellective skills of management.[4]

4) James G. March, "Analytical Skills and the University Training of Educational Administrators", The Journal of Educational Administration, 12:1, May, 1974, p.2

The article points out that many important qualities of an administrator have quite modest intellectual content

> It may be considerably more vital that the administrator be strong, or loving, or energetic, or sensitive, or charismatic, or a member of a particular social, ethnic, or sexual group. We can recognize the importance of such tasks and the legitimacy and value of such attributes without accepting the proposition that the university should provide either the training or the certification for them.[5]

Some quite defensible specifics of this intellectual role of the administrator training program are spelled out in succeeding pages of the March article. In term of the process of evaluating preparation programs, March's recommendations appear to be good candidates for satisfying the requirements of observable job relatedness and seem possible for the university to accomplish; of course, both qualities must be verified by job and program studies. On the basis of existing research it seems probable that systematic job analyses will reveal major commonalities in the various administrative roles; this should be only a little less true for administrators in public or non-public schools, inner-outer- or sub-urban environments, at elementary or secondary levels.

These common knowledge and skill requirements could be scrutinized for their intellectual bases and the results used to evaluate the relevancy of a university core training program to administrative practice. The same process could apply to skills and understandings peculiar to different administra roles and environments, and the university programs' elective courses planned and evaluated accordingly.

I suggest then, that the title of this paper might almost be reversed. We can only build long range evaluation into new models of administrator preparation if we build the new models upon carefully conducted analyses of

5) March, p.28

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inservice administrative behavior. The content validity of the preparation is then assured and long range evaluation simply requires the updating of job analyses and their comparison with current training programs.

There are some important issues this writer has chosen to ignore because of the contraints of time, space, or courage. When the relevancy of preparation programs to administrative practice has been determined, we've not yet considered how well the program prepares its graduates. This problem of internal program evaluation deserves its own full scale discussion. The job analyses approach appears to frustrate the academic's classic desire to train for what should or will be, rather than for what is. But we must walk before we can soar; preparation must be based on systematically identified administrative behaviors with which the university is competent to deal. It probably doesn't matter how well the faculty is teaching if their instruction isn't demonstrably based on what administrators do now.

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